



Chesterton United Methodist Church

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*Making Disciples of Jesus Christ
for the Transformation of the World*

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Subject: In Response to General Conference 2019

To the Precious and Beloved People of Chesterton UMC,

The global United Methodist Church held a General Conference on February 23-26, 2019 to consider our stance on same-sex weddings and the ordination of non-celibate homosexual persons. After much worship, prayer, and discussion a “Traditional Plan” was passed by 53% of the 800+ international delegates. In essence, this plan maintains the current *Book of Discipline* language and increases the penalties associated with it. Also passed, was a “Disaffiliation Plan” which provides guidelines for congregations who wish to leave the UMC “for reasons of conscience” regarding issues of human sexuality.

There is much that is unknown today about our future regarding this matter.

Both plans are scheduled for review by the UM Judicial Council on April 23-25 to determine if any parts are in conflict with our UMC constitution. Previously, 10 of 17 parts of the Traditional Plan were ruled unconstitutional. We do not know what may or may not take effect from these plans on January 1, 2020.

The next regular General Conference will convene on May 5-15, 2020. We do not know what petitions may come before this body and what actions may be taken.

There are also key things that are known and will continue to guide us in our common mission, as they have in our past.

We have and will continue to:

- See ALL people as being of sacred worth to God.
- Welcome ALL people to worship, share the sacraments and be part of us.
- Receive any person, who loves Jesus and is growing in discipleship, to be a member of our church.
- Encourage any disciple, including LGBTQIA+, to use their God-given gifts and talents to serve in ministry and in lay leadership.
- Celebrate, practice and share love with each other and in our community.

To be clear, our *UM Book of Discipline* has not and continues to not allow:

- UM clergy to officiate marriages of same-sex couples.
- Church property to be used for weddings of same-sex couples.
- Conferences and bishops to ordain “self-avowed, practicing homosexuals”.

NOTE: Homosexual persons who are celibate are eligible for ordination.

Friends, we are a world-wide denomination and a local congregation made up of people who love Jesus and desire to follow him but are not of one mind regarding this issue. We are not of one mind on other biblical, social and political subjects also. Some are pleased by this vote and others are disappointed. Many more are hurting and anxious. My hope is that we will continue to be intentional about listening to one another, learning from one another, caring for one another and living well together in our difference.

God is love. God’s standard for how he loves you and for how he desires you to love others has not changed. As the apostle Paul penned,

Love is patient, love is kind.

It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Love never fails. *1 Corinthians 13:4-8a*

With God’s help, may it be so!

Grace and peace be with you,



Heather Foley
Sr. Pastor